

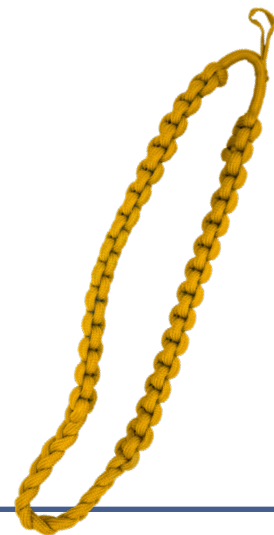
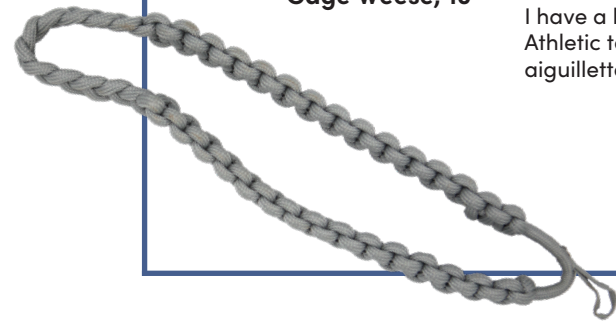
SHOULDERING SUCCESS

NJROTC students receive aiguillettes to recognize their dedication and excellence

"I have an aiguillette in marksmanship. I got it because I made varsity."
Gage Weese, 10

"I have multiple aiguillettes but we only wear one per shoulder. Most of the time we don't usually wear them. But I have a leadership academy, Athletic team and a drill team aiguillette."
Daniel Keech, 12

"I was awarded the leadership academy aiguillette for graduating leadership academy during the summer after going into freshman year. I was awarded the Color Guard aiguillette because I am in North's ROTC Color Guard routine and have been since the beginning of my sophomore year."
Sofia Porraz, 11



On the stage, junior Lucas McGriff holds his rifle for color guard during the presentation of colors while the national anthem plays at the Black History Month Program assembly. "Doing the color guard for anything is a really fun experience," McGriff said. "We get to travel to some really cool places." | **photo by teryn debey**



Best friend duo freshman Brooklyn Bonewits and senior Sabrina Dubois embrace in a hug after a successful performance. "It was my first time performing this new move and it was really nerve racking," Bonewits said. | **photo by robert leon**



NOW
90
total students enrolled in ROTC in 2022
VS
THEN
82
students in 1969 when NJROTC program began

BETTER than ever BEFORE

SM North NJROTC's key to success is hard work and dedication to practice

In late January every year, the SMN NJROTC team competed in the Area 9 Regional Championship in Oklahoma City, which was comprised of 620 schools.

"The moments at the hotel leading to the competition it's always a mix of nerves and anticipation," senior Luke Alois said. "We practice all year for these competitions and this competition is the direct result of the work we put in all year to determine if we are at that criteria for nationals."

After placing first in all of the categories, NJROTC swept the competition with a perfect score of 6,000. Due to the win, they competed in NJROTC nationals in Pensacola, Florida March 29 through April 4.

"Now as a senior going to Pensacola after four years of hard work, all of the passion and love I have for this team is coming together," senior Daniel Keech said. "I think the rest of this team is ready to get after it."

When competing in an exhibition routine, everything was based on counts. Every step taken was a count which had to be counted in a cadence that everyone was on.

"When I do drill, the only thing going through my head is that I do my job, the way I've practiced it over and over again," senior Owen Dooley said. "I do what I've been taught, and as long as everyone else does the same, we get nice, crisp and clean drill routines."

When competing in a regulation routine, the team was in a platoon formation and given commands from the commander. Everything had to be precise to help the routine look smooth, crisp and clean.

The team practiced every morning from 6 a.m. to 7:20 a.m.. They also practiced during school breaks, three or four days for about four hours, and practiced the days leading up to competitions from about 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.. Dooley elaborated on what it meant to perform drill successfully.

"In regulation, that means executing every command with precision and in perfect sync with everyone else," Dooley said. "To do good drill, it takes a really good instructor and a lot of hard practice."

All the hard work paid off as they got sixth overall and first in Armed Platoon Basic Drill. Senior Sabrina Dubois who led the winning drill team at Nationals said that the key to SM North's ROTC program's success was the hard work and dedication to practice.

"To make it in ROTC you have to have determination and mental toughness," Dubois said. "You have to be coachable, you have to want to win. You have to be accountable, ROTC is a team sport, your team is counting on you to show up every day and put everything you have into the practice." | **story by madison elmer**

Posting the colors, NJROTC color guard, (left to right) Jade Gomez, Abigale Serling, Morgan Ashley, Owen Dooley, Sabrina Dubois, George Colburn, Mikayla Wlezien, Catherine Henry, worked together to raise the flag before the homecoming football game on Oct. 8 | **photo by neveh dull**

